

Entity: Robert Shillman

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Basic Information

- **Type:** Person / Donor / US tech billionaire
- **Status:** Active
- **Known aliases:** "Dr Bob" (citing his MIT PhD)
- **Background:** US tech entrepreneur, MIT PhD, key figure in transatlantic "counter-jihad" movement
- **Companies:** Shillman fellowship programme, David Horowitz Freedom Center (DHFC) partner
- **Political role:** Major funder of transatlantic far-right / counter-jihad influencers

Role in Ecosystem

Robert Shillman is a US tech billionaire who has funded ~20 "Shillman fellowships" working with Rebel Media (Canada) and the David Horowitz Freedom Center. He is the **key documented US funder of Tommy Robinson's transformation** from street agitator to social media influencer.

Shillman represents the **US counter-jihad donor → UK far-right influencer** pipeline. His fellowship model systematically funds anti-Muslim content creators across the transatlantic right.

Money IN (Funding Received)

Date	From	Amount	Type	Confidence	Source
Ongoing	Tech ventures (details unknown)	Billions (estimated)	Business income	REPORTED	Observer profile

Narrative: Shillman's source of wealth is described as "tech" but specific companies/ventures not detailed in Observer piece. MIT PhD background suggests tech entrepreneurship.

Money OUT (Funding Given)

Date	To	Amount	Type	Confidence	Source
2017-2018	Tommy Robinson (via Rebel Media fellowship)	~£85,000	Fellowship/salary	CONFIRMED	The Observer Sept 2025
Ongoing	~20 Shillman fellowships total	Unknown (significant)	Fellowships	CONFIRMED	The Observer
Ongoing	Rebel Media / Rebel News	Unknown	Partnership/funding	CONFIRMED	The Observer
Ongoing	David Horowitz Freedom Center	Unknown	Partnership/investment	CONFIRMED	The Observer
2017-2018	Katie Hopkins (Rebel Media fellow)	Unknown	Fellowship	CONFIRMED	The Observer
Various	Other counter-jihad influencers	Unknown	Fellowships	CONFIRMED	The Observer

Narrative: Shillman's funding model is systematic and institutional:

- 1. **Fellowships:** ~20 positions across Rebel Media and DHFC
- 2. **Partnerships:** Works with established right-wing media organisations
- 3. **Focus:** Anti-Muslim / "counter-jihad" content creators
- 4. **Scale:** Multi-year commitments (Robinson's was ~£85k over a year)

Known Fellows / Recipients (CONFIRMED)

Recipient	Platform	Content Focus	Amount
Tommy Robinson	Rebel Media (2017-18)	Anti-Muslim, "citizen journalism"	~£85,000 over 1 year
Katie Hopkins	Rebel Media	Anti-Muslim documentary ("mass slaughter")	Unknown
Laura Loomer	Rebel Media	Anti-Muslim, anti-immigration, US congressional candidate	Unknown
Raheem Kassam	Rebel Media	Former Breitbart London editor, Farage adviser	Unknown

Source: Wikipedia (Robert J. Shillman article): "fellows were Laura Loomer, Raheem Kassam and Katie Hopkins." Observer: Robinson's fellowship confirmed separately.

Management: Fellowships are managed by the **David Horowitz Freedom Center** (DHFC), of which Shillman is a board member (Al Bawaba, 2018).

Other Shillman activities: Sponsored controversial competitions to draw cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad.

Companies / Entities Controlled

Company Name	Role	Status	Notes
Shillman Fellowship Programme	Funder/operator	Active	~20 fellows
David Horowitz Freedom Center (partner)	Partner organisation	Active	Right-wing think tank

Known Associations

Person/Org	Relationship	Evidence
Tommy Robinson	Shillman fellow (2017-18)	The Observer
Katie Hopkins	Shillman fellow	The Observer
Rebel Media / Rebel News	Partner organisation	The Observer
David Horowitz	Personal associate, DHFC	The Observer
David Horowitz Freedom Center	Partner funder	The Observer
"Counter-jihad" movement	Key figure	The Observer

Ideological Mission

DHFC mission statement (per Observer): "to promote freedom and to expose the lies of the radical left, the Islamist movement, and their allies in the media."

Counter-jihad movement: Transatlantic network focused on opposing Islam/Muslim immigration, framed as civilizational struggle.

Shillman's role: Provides the financial infrastructure for this movement's media operations.

Impact on UK Far-Right

Tommy Robinson's transformation: The Shillman fellowship was the pivotal moment when Robinson reinvented himself from "rightwing agitator to self-styled 'citizen journalist', with slick videos and a vast social media following."

110,000-strong march: Robinson's Shillman-funded profile enabled him to draw 110,000 protesters to the "Unite the Kingdom" demonstration in London.

Dental work: Shillman money paid for Robinson's "perfect new teeth" — visible symbol of his transformation, flashed at 2018 "Free Tommy" rallies.

Network effect: Robinson's Shillman-funded profile connected him to "a Who's Who of far-right influencers with millions of followers online."

Legal / Regulatory Questions

US tax-exempt status:

- If DHFC is 501(c)(3), funding political influencers may violate IRS rules
- Fellowships to foreign nationals (Robinson is UK) for political activity

UK Electoral Commission:

- Does Shillman funding of Robinson count as foreign political funding?
- Robinson was not a registered party at the time, but activity was clearly political

Foreign influence:

- US billionaire systematically funding UK political influencers
- No UK regulatory framework for this kind of transnational media funding

Media Coverage

Date	Outlet	Headline	Key Claims	URL
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2025-09-13	The Observer	"US cash turned Tommy Robinson into the poster boy of UK far right"	Shillman fellowship funded Robinson's transformation, ~£85k over year, also funded Katie Hopkins, ~20 fellowships total, DHFC partnership	https://observer.co.uk/news/national/article/us-cash-turned-tommy-robinson-into-the-poster-boy-of-uk-far-right
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Research Notes

Key questions:

- **Source of wealth:** What tech companies/ventures made Shillman a billionaire? MIT PhD in what field?
- **Total fellowship spending:** What's the total amount Shillman has spent on ~20 fellowships over the years?
- **Other UK fellows:** Besides Robinson and Hopkins, any other UK-based Shillman fellows?
- **DHFC financials:** IRS 990 for David Horowitz Freedom Center — how much Shillman money flows through?
- **Rebel Media finances:** What's the financial relationship between Shillman and Rebel Media?
- **Other UK targets:** Has Shillman funded any other UK far-right figures directly or indirectly?
- **Current activity:** Are Shillman fellowships still active? Who are the current fellows?

Leads to follow:

- IRS 990 search for David Horowitz Freedom Center (find EIN)
- ProPublica Nonprofit Explorer: DHFC filings
- Rebel Media corporate structure (Canadian registration?)
- Full list of Shillman fellows past and present
- MIT records: what was Shillman's PhD field?
- Tech company history: what made him a billionaire?
- Cross-reference Shillman fellows with other US funders (MEF, TPUSA, ADF)

Red flags:

- US billionaire systematically funding UK far-right influencers
- ~20 fellowships = institutional-scale operation, not one-off donations
- Counter-jihad movement has explicit anti-Muslim ideology
- Fellowship model obscures direct donor-recipient relationship
- No UK regulatory oversight of this transnational funding
- Transformed Robinson from street agitator to influential media figure

Significance: Shillman represents the most systematic documented US funding of UK far-right activity:

1. **Institutional model:** Fellowships, not one-off donations
2. **Transatlantic scope:** US money → Canadian platform → UK influencer
3. **Counter-jihad focus:** Explicit anti-Muslim ideology
4. **Media transformation:** Funded Robinson's reinvention as "citizen journalist"
5. **Network building:** Created interconnected web of far-right influencers
6. **Scale:** ~20 fellowships = major ongoing operation

Last Updated

- **Date:** 2026-06-14
- **Researcher:** Initial data collection session
- **Next actions:**
 - IRS 990 search for David Horowitz Freedom Center
 - Full list of Shillman fellows
 - Rebel Media corporate structure
 - Shillman's tech business history
 - Cross-reference with other US funders
 - UK regulatory implications

Revision #1

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